



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD877

Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; affirmative finding 2-year renewal.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS, (Assistant Administrator) has issued an affirmative finding 2-year renewal for the Government of Ecuador under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). This affirmative finding 2-year renewal will allow yellowfin tuna and yellowfin tuna products harvested in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP) in compliance with the International Dolphin Conservation Program (IDCP) by Ecuadorian-flag purse seine vessels or purse seine vessels operating under Ecuadorian jurisdiction to be imported into the United States. The affirmative finding 2-year renewal was based on review of documentary evidence submitted by the Government of Ecuador and obtained from the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

DATES: The affirmative finding 2-year renewal is effective for the 2-year period of April 1, 2013 (retroactive) through March 31, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Justin Greenman, West Coast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 501 W. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802. Phone: 562-980-3264 Email: justin.greenman@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The MMPA, 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*, allows for importation into the United States of yellowfin tuna harvested by purse seine vessels in the ETP under certain conditions. If requested by the harvesting nation, the Assistant Administrator will determine whether to make an affirmative finding based upon documentary evidence provided by the government of the harvesting nation, the IATTC, or the Department of State.

The affirmative finding process requires that the harvesting nation is meeting its obligations under the IDCP and obligations of membership in the IATTC. Every 5 years, the government of the harvesting nation must request a new affirmative finding and submit the required documentary evidence directly to the Assistant Administrator. On an annual basis, NMFS reviews the affirmative finding and determines whether the harvesting nation continues to meet the requirements. A nation may provide information related to compliance with IDCP and IATTC measures directly to NMFS on an annual basis or may authorize the IATTC to release the information to NMFS to annually renew an affirmative finding determination without an application from the harvesting nation.

An affirmative finding will be terminated, in consultation with the Secretary of State, if the Assistant Administrator determines that the requirements of 50 CFR 216.24(f) are no longer being met or that a nation is consistently failing to take enforcement actions on violations, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of the IDCP.

As a part of the affirmative finding process set forth in 50 CFR 216.24(f), the Assistant Administrator considered documentary evidence submitted by the Government of Ecuador and obtained from the IATTC and has determined that Ecuador has met the MMPA's requirements to

receive an affirmative finding 2-year renewal.

After consultation with the Department of State, the Assistant Administrator issued an affirmative finding 2-year renewal to Ecuador, allowing the continued importation into the United States of yellowfin tuna and products derived from yellowfin tuna harvested in the ETP by Ecuadorian-flag purse seine vessels or purse seine vessels operating under Ecuadorian jurisdiction for the 2-year period of April 1, 2013 (retroactive) through March 31, 2015. Ecuador's 5-year affirmative finding will remain valid through March 31, 2015.

Dated: April 24, 2015.

Eileen Sobeck,

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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